A monochromatic blue-toned image of a snowy night. A bridge with a lattice structure spans across the middle ground. Snow is falling heavily, creating a sense of motion. The scene is dimly lit, with a small light source at the top center.

DOCTOR WHO

Snowfall

By Gavin Collinson

&

Mark B. Oliver

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Frozen, The Thaw, Vampire Hurricane and Station Pressure by Gavin Collinson

Cold Snap by Mark B. Oliver

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Chapter One

Frozen

By Gavin Collinson

Something was wrong.

David Kershaw looked down the station platform and was left open-mouthed by what he saw.

Not just a little bit wrong, but a big fat *what on earth is going on?* wrong.

Christmas Eve and it should have been heaving with kids and commuters, rushing home with last minute gifts but the platform was empty and as he turned to take in the rest of the station, he could see the whole place was deserted. He glanced at his watch. 20:02. Weird. He'd been awake at Woking, ten minutes ago, must have dozed off and the next stop should have been Waterloo. The end of the line. So when he woke up and noticed the train had rolled to a halt he'd clambered onto the platform. It wasn't until the last carriage whooshed past him that he realised this wasn't a London terminal. Too small. Too quaint. Too *wooden*. So where was he and... something else struck him. *Oh, no!* The snow...

The snow was inches deep across the platform, an even, untouched carpet indicating that not only was the station deserted now, but no-one had been here for hours. Maybe days. Except... He squinted to a spot at the end of the platform. He could make out one small space where the snow had hardly fallen. A conspicuous square patch about three foot wide that only had a light coating of white flakes. Something had been there until very recently, but there were no tracks leading to or from the square and so how had -

- No time to consider that little mystery. David hit the speed dial for his wife and as he waited for an answer, he smiled at the falling snow. A warm smile as he recalled a childhood moment. Sledging down the street during one of those weeks when bad weather had closed school. He'd spent hours playing outside on the sleigh with his brother and on Boxing Day, when Mum asked, 'What was your favourite present?', they'd answered in unison, 'The snow!' and their dad had grumbled, 'We shouldn't have bothered forking out for the Atari, then...'

No answer. He looked at his phone. No signal. No bar. Not even one of those half bars that means you should wave your phone around and hope for the best. Nothing.

Okay. Don't panic. Another train would be along soon and he'd be in Waterloo within the hour. The icy wind lashed around him and whistled through the platform benches. And then he saw it. On the opposite platform, a large old-fashioned sign that read 'Refreshment Room' and beyond it, the room itself, or rather a frosted glass window

through which he could see the silhouettes of two figures. He suddenly felt hope. They'd know where he was and when the next train was due. David Kershaw turned up the collar of his coat and headed towards the light.

The refreshment room's solitary customer, Big Jack, sat at a corner table, his hands cupping a mug of hot tea. His train to London Paddington had stopped, he'd alighted and then found that the announcements had been wrong. Too late. He was stuck in what looked like a country railway station, although the girl behind the tea bar had told him the next train into the city would be along any minute. That had been half an hour and two mugs of tea ago.

He glanced at the girl. She looked to be in her early twenties, pretty with long red hair. She wore a white blouse and a peaked porter's cap, tilted at a rakish angle. This clearly belonged to the young man who leant easily across the bar, chatting to her. He wore an old-fashioned porter's uniform. Black suit, cream shirt, top button undone and tie at half mast. He had short dark hair, kind eyes and when the girl teased him, he occasionally replied with a dry come-back but usually he just shook his head and smiled like he'd heard it all before and loved her anyway.

Jack took a sip of his tea and almost choked on it when he saw who walked into the room: David Kershaw.

The new-comer smiled at the girl in the hat. 'Hi! Do you know when the next train to London is?'

'Any minute now.' She spoke with a soft Scottish accent.

David nodded. 'Great. Do I have time for a cup of rosy?'

'Always time for a cuppa!' She studied the huge silver samovar on the counter and gingerly poured him a mug of tea. 'Here you go! On the house.'

'Thanks! That's very kind of...'. His voice trailed off as he noticed Jack. A pause. He picked up his tea, walked over to the big man's table and took a chair. They glared at each other. David said, 'How long's it been?'

'Not long enough.'

'Ten years?'

'Like I said, not long enough.' Big Jack took a mouthful of tea. It burnt his tongue but he tried not to let on. 'What are you doing here?'

'Just passing through.'

Silence for a couple of minutes. 'Just passing through?' said Jack. 'An abandoned station. Middle of nowhere. You. Me. Something's going on.'

'Your imagination was always on the wild side,' David countered. 'Although...'

'Although?'

'This place *does* look deserted. The snow's undisturbed out there except for a square about the size of...' He grinned, despite himself. 'Well, you wouldn't understand but about yay big,' he added, stretching his arms.

'I wouldn't understand? Didn't take you long to start, did it? What wouldn't I understand?'

'Believe me, you would not get the reference! Hardly anyone on this *planet* would! But I was going to say, about the size of the TARDIS.'

Jack's mug paused mid-way to his lips. 'Did you say TARDIS?'

David managed to make Yes stretch to two syllables.

'As in the Doctor?'

'As in the Doctor. How on earth did... have you *met* the Doctor?'

Big Jack gave a big laugh. 'Have I met the Doctor? You think this is weird?' he gestured to their surroundings. 'Listen to this!'

Chapter Two

Cold Snap, Part One

By Mark B. Oliver

Louie shivered as he, Millie and his Aunty Rachael trudged through the snow. The snow was so deep it was reaching the top of his wellies and his feet felt like blocks of ice despite the two pairs of socks he was wearing. Even though he was freezing, he was excited as they were on their way to see the pantomime in the local theatre.

'Are you okay, love?' said Aunty Rachael who was clutching both him and Millie tightly as the conditions worsened. Louie nodded as his teeth chattered from the cold.

'I still think we should have asked the Doctor,' Millie chipped in, seemingly unbothered by the heavy snow. 'I bet he would have loved to have come with us.'

'And how are you going to tell him we're going, Millie? We haven't seen him since Bonfire Night.'

'I'm going to call him, silly.' And with that Millie pulled her mobile 'phone from her pocket, the one she was only supposed to use in emergencies. But before her mum could reproach her, Millie had deftly dialed the number the Doctor had given them, despite her thick gloves. She pouted. 'Voicemail.'

'There we are,' declared Aunty Rachael as through the falling snow they could finally make out the warm inviting lights of the theatre.

'Doctor, it's Millie, you remember, Guy Fawkes dummies trying to scare us witless and that nasty alien? Anyway, Louie and me are off to see *Peter Pan* in town and thought you might like to join us. Sorry for the late notice...' They climbed the steps and pulled open the heavy wooden door. 'The panto starts at...'

'...7pm!' finished the Doctor, who was standing in the foyer beaming over at them.

'Doctor!' Millie and Louie cried out as they ran over and gave him the biggest hug they could muster.

He held out his hand. 'Hello, I'm the Doctor.'

'So I gathered,' replied Aunty Rachael with a smile, 'I'm Millie's mum, Rachael. My sister and these two have told me a tale or two about you.'

'All true, sadly,' grinned the Doctor.

'But how come you're here already, Doctor?' asked Louie. 'Millie was still leaving the

message.'

'Oh well, you know how it is, there I was fighting off the alien hordes of the Gendhi on the planet Visperon when my 'phone rang, not exactly ideal timing as you can imagine. Months later I remembered the call, listened to Millie's message but it cut off before she said the time! So I've been here for a bit, not that long, a few hours maybe...' He beamed, seemingly oblivious to the bewildered look on Rachael's face.

'It's a bit quiet,' Louie noticed as he glanced around the deserted foyer.

'Isn't it? It's been like this since I arrived, I thought maybe I had missed it altogether. Amy is always saying that I have no sense of timing and *that* coming from a woman who ran off the night before her wedding!'

'There aren't even any staff around,' chimed in Millie.

The foyer was large with a high vaulted ceiling, a huge chandelier and a staircase going up the far wall, presumably to the Circle. The ticket booth was dark, as was the food and drink stand, but the room itself was bathed in warm lighting. Millie and Louie jumped as a door behind them slammed shut and the newcomers whirled around to see a slightly built man in his early thirties before them. He had a warm open face, brown short hair and was much shorter than the Doctor.

'Blimey, I didn't think anyone would make it in tonight. The weather is atrocious. I was just going to lock up,' he said smiling.

The Doctor had wandered over to the front doors and was looking outside. 'The snow and wind have really picked up,' said the Doctor over his shoulder, 'I don't think we're going anywhere for a while.'

'Well, it's just the five of us then,' said the man. 'I'm the only member of staff who made it in, not even any of the actors are here.'

Louie and Millie looked glum at the news, as the Doctor and his friends introduced themselves.

'I'm Jack, but all my friends call me Big Jack,' he declared. Millie stifled a laugh.

'Millie!' admonished her mother, but Big Jack just laughed, tussling Millie's curly hair.

'Oh, I don't mind, I'm used to it,' he replied. 'My mum used to call me Big Jack as I was the eldest. I didn't grow *too* big did I?' he said winking at Millie.

'How about a cuppa?' After enthusiastic nods, Jack fumbled with the large tea urn behind the counter and soon had it working.

'I don't suppose you have the key to that room over there do you?' asked the Doctor motioning to a door on the far side of the foyer under the stairs.

'Sorry mate, no, that's the cashier's office. Only the manager and Mrs. Wharburton have the key. Why?'

'Oh, I um, just left a box in there earlier. Silly of me really, not paying attention and the

door shut behind me. I was just hoping to nip back in and get it.' As Big Jack turned his attention back to the tea, Louie sidled up to the Doctor.

'The TARDIS?' The Doctor nodded. 'Why don't you just use the sonic?'

'It's a deadlock, Louie,' the Doctor said dejectedly, 'the sonic can't open it, I'll have to find another way in.' With that, the Doctor dug deep in his pockets and was soon waving a gadget around in the air. 'It's getting colder,' he declared, his breath visible in the air.

'You're right,' replied Aunty Rachael. 'I'd thought it was my imagination.'

'The boiler may be on its last legs, but it's usually more than capable of keeping this old place toasty,' replied Jack as he handed out mugs of tea.

'But this weather is exceptional,' declared the Doctor, 'the temperature *inside* is dropping at an alarming rate - this goes way beyond freak weather.' The Doctor was wandering around the foyer taking further readings. 'What am I missing?' he mused to himself. 'An outside influence? But why is it just getting colder inside?' The Doctor's pacing was making Millie feel giddy. He stopped suddenly and took a gulp from his mug. 'Oh good tea, Jack, thanks,' he said as he quickly drained his cup.

With that the lights went out and Millie let out a small yelp.

'Sorry,' she apologized to no-one in particular.

The Doctor soon fished out a torch. He was immediately next to the front doors scraping away the ice that had formed on the inside of the windows. He peered outside.

'I can see lights through the snow, so it just seems to be us,' the Doctor informed them.

'We have an emergency generator in the basement, just in case power goes off during a performance,' Big Jack interjected. 'If I nip down and get that on, we should be OK.'

'Maybe we should leave,' suggested Aunty Rachael, 'if it's getting as cold as you say, Doctor.'

As the Doctor turned to answer, he noticed his friends were stood directly below the ornate chandelier that moments earlier had bathed the foyer in light. But now in the darkness, the Doctor could see the light from his torch reflecting off it. Ice. Lots of ice. The Doctor dove at the group, as the thin chain holding the heavy fixture suddenly broke from the increased weight. The Doctor just reached them in time, pushing them clear as the chandelier shattered on the ground.

'Is everyone alright?' They all nodded, shaken by the experience, as the Doctor helped them to their feet.

'We should definitely leave,' said Aunty Rachael, her arms around her two young charges.

'The doors are frozen shut and we have more immediate concerns,' added the Doctor as he touched Louie on the forehead. 'How do you feel?'

'Cold, and I have a fuzzy head,' replied Louie who was feeling weak suddenly.

'Did you get wet on your way here?'

'Just my feet, some snow came over the top of my wellies, my socks are wet.'

'We need to lay you down,' the Doctor said urgently.

'Over here, the manager's office has a couch,' said Big Jack. The Doctor handed his torch to Aunty Rachael and gently scooped Louie off his feet as Jack led them gingerly towards the room in the gloom.

Laying Louie on the sofa, the Doctor removed Louie's boots and Aunty Rachael took off his soaking wet socks. His feet were blue and his aunt started rubbing them, trying to improve the circulation; Louie had hypothermia.

'We need to raise his core temperature. Jack can you bring the tea urn in here?'

'Err, sure, Doctor.' He looked confused by the request but did as he was asked.

'Now Louie, do you understand, that you've got just a bit too cold and we are going to warm you up. You're going to be just fine. Millie, could you bring that small table a bit closer?' As Millie dragged the table over, Jack brought in the urn. The Doctor motioned for him to put it on the table. 'Stand back everyone!'

The Doctor aimed his sonic screwdriver at the urn. The sharp piecing hum echoed around the theatre and slowly at first, and then with increasing speed, the urn started to heat up, the dull silver metal, turning bright red. Soon it was radiating heat throughout the small room. 'There,' said the Doctor. 'That should keep this room nice and warm for a few hours.' He handed Louie the sonic. 'Do you remember how it works, Louie?'

Louie nodded.

'If it starts to cool down, just give it another quick burst.' The Doctor removed his jacket covering Louie with it.

'Jack, are there any blankets we could find for Louie?'

'Yes, upstairs Some of our older patrons like to have a blanket across their laps. I could show you.'

'No, I'll get them,' said the Doctor, 'we need you to switch on the emergency power.'

'Right,' replied Big Jack, who turned to leave. 'Hang on in there, kid,' he said with a smile.

As Big Jack left, Millie declared she was going with the Doctor. 'We need as many blankets as we can find, and you can't carry them all.' Millie's mum nodded her agreement as she turned her attention back to her nephew.

'Be quick, Doctor, and look after my baby girl.'

'Mum!' cried an embarrassed Millie, but the Doctor simply replied that he would and then they were gone.

'It's okay, Louie, I'm here with you.'

'Thanks, Aunty.' With the others gone, Aunty Rachael shivered, not from the cold but she because she was scared, she was scared for all of them.

Big Jack made his way backstage in the darkness. Thankfully he had worked here for years and knew the way like the back of his hand. It was strange though, eerie, for the theatre to be so dark, so quiet. It usually teemed with both life and laughter. As he found the door that led to the basement he failed to notice the smallest of movement in the shadows. Something was watching him. Jack closed the door behind him as he made his way down the metal staircase into the basement.

Millie held onto the Doctor's hand tightly, pressing on despite the cold and her fear. It was much colder on the upper level and the Doctor shone the torch around in search of the cupboard that contained the blankets. Icicles had formed on the ceiling and the carpet was covered in ice. Not needing to be told, Millie carefully followed the Doctor down the hallway.

Aunty Rachael thought she heard a noise, and she cocked her head to listen intently. Louie's eyes were closing, but Aunty Rachael turned her attention back to him.

'Come on love, you must keep awake. You hear me? Why don't you tell me about the first time you met the Doctor?' Rallying at the thought of their previous adventure, Louie began to recount the fateful day he had gotten a puncture on his way home from school. Aunty Rachael, though, was only half listening, 'What was that noise?' she thought to herself.

Big Jack weaved his way around the props that littered the basement until he found his way to the generator. It was rusty and didn't look as though it had been used in years, but he knew what he was doing and set about switching it on. He was quite oblivious to the fact that the basement door behind him was now wide open.

Millie and the Doctor stood before the cupboard, its doors frozen shut.

'I don't suppose you have another sonic?' asked Millie hopefully, but the words died on her lips as she saw the look on the Doctor's face. Looking around she saw a fire extinguisher a short way down the corridor. 'Could we use that somehow?'

'Brilliant!' exclaimed the Doctor loudly, as he gingerly picked up the frozen extinguisher. 'Oh, yes, that's rather cold,' he said as he quickly moved it from hand to hand to stop it sticking.

'At these temperatures, the metal handle should be quite brittle. One hefty thump should

do it.' With that the Doctor hit the latch which shattered as if made of glass. The door swung open revealing a stack of dry blankets. Millie whooped with glee and grabbed as many as she could carry, and the Doctor did likewise.

'Let's get back downstairs to Louie and your mum.'

Louie was still telling his story, when suddenly his aunt motioned with her hand for him to be quiet.

'Did you hear that?' Both of them listened intently. There was a strange slithering sound outside.

'Doctor? Jack?' called out Aunty Rachael, but there was no reply. She leapt up, grabbed a chair and wedged it under the door handle. As she backed away the handle started to move.

Jack was finishing his safety check of the generator before switching it on. He shivered as he reached for the switch, when he suddenly felt something cold and wet on his back. Resisting the urge to panic, he tried to turn to see what was there but he couldn't move. Whatever had attached itself was draining his life energy. His legs began to buckle and he could feel everything going dark.

'Quickly, Doctor!' exclaimed Millie as they carried the blankets towards the staircase. In her haste, she slipped on the icy carpet. She reached out for the balustrade to break her fall, but the frozen metal shattered under her weight. Millie screamed as she toppled off the balcony.

Chapter Three

Cold Snap, Part Two

By Mark B. Oliver

With amazing speed the Doctor grabbed Millie's wrist as she fell. Dangling in mid-air, terrified, she looked up at the Doctor, her eyes pleading with him not to let her fall.

'It's okay, Millie, I've got you. Don't struggle.' Slowly the Doctor pulled her up to safety until she was back on the balcony. She flung her arms around his neck burying her face in his shoulder, holding back tears. Her chest heaved as she tried to catch her breath in the icy air. Pulling herself away, she looked at the Doctor.

'You saved my life, Doctor, thank you,' she said, clearly shaken.

'Oh that? All in a day's work. Besides, I seem to recall a certain young lady saving me from a very unfriendly dummy not so long ago.' The Doctor nudged her gently in the ribs, making Millie smile sheepishly.

With more bravado than she felt she said, 'Come on we have to get these blankets to Louie.' The Doctor helped her to her feet. And very carefully the friends made their way down the icy staircase.

'Millie!' cried out Auntie Rachael as she heard her daughter scream in the distance. She made for the door but the handle was still turning. Gripped with indecision, Auntie Rachael sank to her knees. Louie had an idea.

'Hang on, aunty, if I just adjust the sonic like the Doctor showed me.' He aimed the sonic at the door and switched it on. A short burst of noise emitted from the device and the handle abruptly stopped moving. 'Hopefully that has scared it off for now.'

'Whatever it is,' replied his aunt.

As Jack began to black out his legs buckled and he stumbled forward activating the generator as he fell. The machinery sprang into life and the lights throughout the theatre came on. Whatever was on his back became dislodged and heat again began to pulse through Jack's body. He slowly turned his head and out of the corner of his eye, he saw something dome-shaped, grey and gelatinous slither behind one of the many boxes. Resisting the urge to be sick, he pulled himself up and staggered towards the stairs.

'Good old Jack!' declared the Doctor brightly, as the lights came on just as they reached the bottom of the stairs, their arms full of blankets.

With that Jack staggered into the far side of the foyer before collapsing to the floor.

'Get these to your cousin,' said the Doctor urgently as he piled his blankets on top of Millie's. She looked over concerned at Jack as she walked the final few steps to the manager's office. The Doctor was sprinting over to Big Jack, agile despite the icy floor.

'Mum, can you open the door?' asked Millie, 'my hands are full.' Millie could hear something being moved away from the door, and almost immediately her mum stood in front of her, a concerned look on her face. Millie stumbled in. Despite everything, Louie let out a feeble laugh at the sight of his cousin's mop of curly hair just visible atop the blankets.

'Here,' said Rachael, as she took the blankets from her daughter and began laying them over Louie. 'I heard you scream, what happened?' asked her worried mother.

'Oh I just slipped mum, it was nothing.' But Louie caught the look Millie shot him.

'Oh, oh. You sounded really panicked.'

'I'm fine mum, honest.'

The Doctor was kneeling over Jack, the young man's face pale and drawn. His strength slowly returning, he explained to the Doctor what had happened.

'Do you think you can stand?' Jack nodded and the Doctor helped him to his feet, and slowly they walked over to the warmth of the office, Big Jack leaning on the Doctor for support. Jack eased himself into the office chair that had barricaded the door just minutes earlier and Auntie Rachael placed some spare blankets over Jack's knees. As she went to place a blanket around his shoulders, the Doctor stopped her and taking a pencil off the nearby desk, he rolled it across Jack's back. Holding it up they all saw that it was covered in grey slime.

'Is it dangerous?' asked Millie.

'I don't think so, but let's get your jacket off, eh, Jack? Just to be sure.' Big Jack slowly removed his jacket and Auntie Rachael covered him with more blankets.

'Something attacked Jack in the basement,' the Doctor told them.

'We heard it,' Auntie Rachael said, 'it was outside the door. It made a kind of slithering noise. It was like nothing I've ever heard before.' The Doctor was studying the slime on the back of Jack's jacket.

'Do you know what it is?' asked Millie.

'I have an idea, Millie, but it doesn't quite fit. What am I missing?' The Doctor ran his hands through his hair in exasperation. With that the lights dimmed but this time didn't

go out completely. 'Stay here,' the Doctor told them emphatically as he went out into the seemingly deserted foyer. After a minute or two Millie joined him.

'Doctor, you're worrying me.'

'Am I? Oh no, that will never do! We've been in much worse scrapes than this, Millie. Besides, my plan will work.'

'Your plan?'

'Yes, the one I'm working on right now, it's nearly there, on the tip of my tongue. It just needs a few more minutes to brew, like a good cup of tea.' Millie screamed, not the reaction the Doctor was expecting at all, but then he saw it, a grey, domed jelly like creature that had attached itself to her back.

Before he could react, the sound of the sonic split the air and the creature fell to the floor. Louie was leaning against the office door. He used his last vestiges of strength to save his cousin. The sonic slipped from his grasp as he sank to the floor.

Big Jack rallied himself, picked the young lad up, and carried him back to the sofa, slipping the discarded sonic in his pocket as he did so. Louie was exhausted and weak, but Jack could see he was a fighter.

'That was a very brave thing you did there, Louie,' Jack told him, 'You and Millie are such great friends. You remind me of someone I haven't seen in a while, he would have done anything 'to help his friends too, to help me.' Louie smiled weakly as Jack's voice trailed off. 'I'm going to get you some water,' said Jack. The Doctor who was standing just outside, smiled at Jack, before turning his attention back to the alien.

Aunty Rachael and Millie were sitting on the foyer floor, Aunty Rachael holding her daughter tightly.

'Are you alright?' Aunty Rachael stammered, hardly able to comprehend what was happening.

'I'm fine, Mum, it only touched me for a second, it was just a bit chilly that's all.'

Aunty Rachael stared at the creature in horror.

'What is it?'

'It's a newborn Brakari,' the Doctor answered. He was sitting cross-legged on the floor next to the alien. 'And it's very sick.'

'What's wrong with it?' asked Millie as she hauled herself up from the floor and moved towards the Doctor.

'Gently does it, we don't want to scare her now, do we?' said the Doctor smiling up at Millie. 'She's only a few hours old. The Brakari are a space dwelling species. They traverse the great distances between the stars and store energy, much like a camel stores water.'

'But this poor little thing is malnourished. Her mother must have been very low on energy when she gave birth.'

'And that's why it,' Aunty Rachael corrected herself, 'she, attacked Millie?'

'The Brakari aren't sentient creatures like you and I Rachael, they act on instinct. She was just doing what she needed to survive.'

'We must help her,' declared Millie, 'we can't let her die, she's just a baby.'

Jack had been listening this whole time, holding a glass of water for Louie. 'Doctor, if the creature, has only just been born, doesn't that mean...' his voice trailed off.

'Yes, the mother is here too. I think it was the mother that attacked you in the basement Jack. A fully grown Brakari, would be able to drain all of the energy from a human in just a few seconds. You were lucky to survive.' Big Jack went pale.

'So how do we find the mother?' he asked.

'Oh, with all of our body heat and the heat from the urn, I think it's much more likely that she will find us.'

'Well that's reassuring,' was his only reply as he took the water into Louie.

'Millie's right, Doctor, we have to help her,' said Aunty Rachael, kneeling beside the infant.

'And I intend to.'

'Doctor!' called Big Jack from the office, 'It's Louie, he unconscious!'

'I have to get into my TARDIS!' said the Doctor as he leapt to his feet.

'Your WHAT-IS?' asked Aunty Rachael.

'It's some special, umm equipment of the Doctor's that's all,' said Millie. The Doctor went over to the doorway under the staircase but it was locked shut.

'Of all the places to land...' said the Doctor in frustration as Millie came over.

'We have to get in Doctor, we have to save Louie and the alien.'

'Think, Doctor, think!' he said to himself.

'You can't open the lock with the sonic?' asked Millie.

'No it's a special kind of lock. A deadlock seal. A bit sophisticated for a cashier's office I would have thought but there you go.'

'But what about the hinges?'

'The hinges?'

'Well you can't open the lock, but can't you just remove the screws from the hinges on the other side of the door?'

'I knew I liked humans for a reason!' said the Doctor triumphantly, as he scooped Millie up and swung her around. 'Come on!'

Big Jack was holding the back of his hand on Louie's forehead, when Millie and the Doctor burst into the office.

'How's he doing?' asked the Doctor.

'About the same, Doctor,' replied Big Jack, 'I'm not sure how much longer he can last.' Millie came over and took Louie's hands between hers.

'Hang on in there, Louie. We have a plan,' his cousin told him, but Louie just lay there, seemingly oblivious to her words.

'Do you have my sonic screwdriver Jack? The cylindrical device Louie had earlier.' Big Jack nodded and handed it over. From outside, Aunty Rachael screamed for the Doctor. He raced towards her, followed by Millie and Big Jack. Aunty Rachael was kneeling next to the baby Brakari, but her eyes were fixed a few feet away from her at what was clearly the adult Brakari. It was shaking as though preparing to pounce on Aunty Rachael.

'Stay calm, Rachael,' implored the Doctor, 'we have to try to calm it down. Make it understand that we want to help them.' He slowly advanced until he stood between Aunty Rachael and the Brakari, but was careful to make sure that the Brakari could see her daughter.

The Doctor lay on his stomach so his face was eyelevel with the Brakari. 'I don't know if the TARDIS can translate what I am saying to you, but we want to help you. If we can get through that door over there,' said the Doctor gesturing with his hand, 'we can provide you with enough energy for both you and your daughter and our young friend in there. Nobody need die.'

Millie found she was holding her breath as the Doctor spoke, scared that the adult Brakari would simply attach itself to the Doctor's face and smother him, draining him of life. Seconds seem to last forever as the Doctor spoke, quietly and reassuring to the alien. Slowly its body movement relaxed and the creature seemed to settle. As the Doctor stood up, the Brakari instantly became agitated again, as she saw her daughter, who had grown increasingly grey and looked almost brittle. The baby was clearly dying.

Big Jack walked over to the Doctor and the Brakari.

'Doctor, you need time to get your equipment, but I don't think this wee one has that time. Let it feed off me. You have to save her and Louie'

'Jack!' cried Millie in alarm, but the Doctor looked Jack in the eye.

'Are you sure Jack, absolutely sure? The child might drain you before I get back, you could die.'

'I can't just stand by and let her die, and you're needed to get the equipment, Doctor, so that leaves me.'

'You're incredibly brave, Big Jack,' said the Doctor simply.

The Doctor knelt down beside the aliens and in his calm reassuring voice, told them that the child, and just the child could feed off Jack and that it was to try to control itself, to just

take enough energy to survive. The Doctor looked up at Jack who nodded and then lay beside the infant.

'Thanks for everything, mum,' whispered Jack to himself.

'Now very slowly, Jack, move your left hand close to her, until just your fingertips are touching. The less physical contact you have, the less energy she should be able to drain at once.' Jack did as the Doctor suggested and as his fingers touched the creature, he stiffened and his hand went icy cold. Aunty Rachael returned from the office where she had been checking on Louie and lay blankets over Jack's prone body.

'Be quick, Doctor!' she implored.

With that the Doctor was on his feet, headed to the cashier's office. Millie was at his side. Millie glanced over her shoulder as the Doctor activated the sonic. Big Jack looked as grey as the aliens now, but at least the mother Brakari hadn't attacked.

'Hurry, Doctor!'

'That's one hinge off, just one more to go.' The Doctor turned his attention to the lower hinge and slowly but surely the screws span out under the influence of the sonic screwdriver. The Doctor handed Millie the sonic. 'Can you remove the last two screws? I need to brace myself against the door otherwise it will crash to the ground.'

Millie took the device, which she had never used before, and under the Doctor's reassuring gaze she activated it. Sure enough the first of the two screws rose out of the hinge and fell quietly to the floor. Less than a minute later the second screw fell away and the Doctor lifted the door clear.

'You're stronger than you look,' smiled Millie.

In the corner of the surprisingly large cashier's office stood the TARDIS. With not a moment to lose the Doctor quickly unlocked the door and Millie and the Doctor went inside.

Jack was fighting to stay awake, every bone in his body felt as though it was made of ice. Aunty Rachael was holding his hand and the Brakari child, while seemingly no better, hadn't deteriorated.

The Doctor and Millie bustled over; the Doctor was carrying some kind of heavy equipment and Millie cables that trailed behind her back into the cashier's office and the TARDIS. Millie handed the Doctor the end of the cabling which he attached to the equipment. Immediately it sprang into life and the Doctor removed a small circular pad and attached it to the infant. The effect was almost immediate. The grey gave way to a vibrant translucent white with small pieces of bright blue inside. Then to everyone's astonishment, the child began to levitate and thin tentacles hung from the body. The Doctor attached placed a further disc on Jack's forehead and then one on the Brakari mother. Millie took a fourth disc and ran in to Louie.

A few moments later, the mother and child were both hovering in the air, the light from their bodies reflecting around the room. Jack propped himself up on one elbow" staring at the aliens. Millie was helping Louie over to the rest of the group, colour back in his cheeks and looking much more like his old self.

A short time later, Jack was finally locking the front doors to the theatre. It was snowing outside still, but from the warmth of the foyer, it looked magical. He slowly walked over to the cashier's office and read the sign on the blue box.

'Police Public Call Box. Nobody is ever going to believe this,' he muttered to himself, as he stepped inside the impossibly large ship. Louie, Millie, the Doctor and Aunty Rachael were stood by the console with the Brakari hovering nearby. Everyone seemingly none the worse for wear.

'Come on, Big Jack!' cried Louie, 'We're going to release them back into space.'

'This truly is a Christmas miracle,' he sighed to himself as the doors closed behind him. The TARDIS engines sprung into life and the ship slowly disappeared from the theatre.

Chapter Four

The Thaw

By Gavin Collinson

David Kershaw looked at the photograph of the Doctor, Big Jack, Millie and Louie.

'It's a grab from the security camera footage,' Jack said.

'I wish I'd thought to take a photo of him,' David replied. 'I think he changed my life. Well, no. He *did* change my life. And I haven't even got...'

The two men sat at the corner table of the station refreshments room.

'Keep it,' Jack said.

But David shook his head. 'I couldn't. Here. It's a good one of you. You always took a good photo, Jackie.'

And as he spoke, Jack opened his wallet to return the snap, and several well-worn photographs tumbled to the table. One landed face-up between them. A faded shot of two young brothers, arms around each other's shoulders and smiles like summertime. Dirty faces, sparkling eyes. A pause. Jack returned the photos to his wallet and the two men finished their mugs of tea in silence.

'Here you go!' It was the girl with long red hair.

'Biscuits!' added the man in the porter's uniform.

'Yeah!' That Scottish accent again. 'Love a biccy!' She placed an unopened tin box on the table. 'You get stuck into these, I'll top up your tea and you two can- ' She started moving her fingers and thumbs as if she was wearing a sock puppet.

'What are you doing?' asked her friend, quietly.

She looked affronted by the question. 'It's like the universal sign thing for talk. Chat. Chinwag thing.'

'Why don't you just say, *have a conversation?*'

'You can be so *boring!*'

'Excuse me!' It was Jack. 'I broke the seal of this so I know it's not been opened but...'

The four of them peered into the box. All the columns of biscuits were full except one.

'How did that happen?' David asked.

'Someone's eaten all the jammy dodgers,' said Jack and the girl began to laugh.

Jack and David were alone again at their table. 'Looks like we have a bit of time to kill before our trains arrive,' said Jack.

'Yeah. Thank god for Bourbons.'

'No. I was kind of meaning you could tell me your story. How you met the Doctor. Got to see the TARDIS.'

'Swapping fun stories at Christmas?' David snapped.

A slight hesitation. 'Why not? It's what brothers do, isn't it?'

'Maybe you're right. Sorry.'

'You're still angry.'

'Angry? I'm still furious, Jack, I'm still... Oh, what's the point?'

'Have another biccyy. Good for... ' Jack did the sock puppet mime and David laughed.

'Okay! You wanna story?'

'I want a story!'

'You want to hear about how the Doctor fought an army of monsters? A tale that takes you from Incan pyramids to man's last stand, way above the city of London?'

'You betcha!'

'Then hang onto your toupee! This is the story of how I met the Doctor. This is the story of the vampire hurricane...'

Chapter Five

Vampire Hurricane, Part One

By Gavin Collinson

'Do you - yes *you* - want to see something incredible? Something so remarkable that it will thrill you until the day you pass from this world to the next? Then come with me...'

David Kershaw shifted in his seat. He sat in a small auditorium in a cinema on London's Southbank. The room had been hired to a private party and he was one of about twenty people who sat rapt. What David Kershaw was about to see would change his life.

'You will witness something that has been unseen for centuries. And you will see it...'

The black and white footage on the screen had every member of the audience enthralled. The onscreen presenter, a long-dead American explorer, was beckoning his audience and they needed no further invitation. For David, an expert in the lost civilisation of the Incas, this reel of film, depicting the legendary and mysterious opening of the Tomb of the Bear in 1934, was one of the two great Holy Grails of Incan-lore. The other was the Great Bear itself but that had been lost since the tomb's excavation. This reel of film, recently discovered in Cairo, was being played for the first time ever and was being seen -

'Now!' declared the explorer.

Natives of the Mexican jungles slung ropes as thick as their arms across their shoulders and pulled. David's eyes widened as they moved away from the huge pyramid. The ropes tautened and began to open the fifteen foot door at the foot of the stone slopes.

'A moment in history! No-one has seen this since the dawn of time!'

Drums began to beat, slowly at first then faster, faster, faster... The door was hauled open and the drums reached a mad crescendo and then -

Nothing. A tiny onscreen cough.

The dust started to clear from the pyramid's doorway and from inside the tomb a silhouette appeared. David squinted. What? Tall. Tweed. Bow tie. *What?*

'Blimey O'Reilly,' said the man emerging from the pyramid.

He raised a mug to the screen. A large porcelain mug that David recognised because shards of it were on display in his museum. 'You could have waited till I'd finished my tea.' He smiled. 'I do like your hat.' A pause. He was looking over the explorer's shoulder. 'Less keen on the spears.'

The screen became a blizzard of scratches and jagged scars. And then David and the audience were back in 1934 as the cameraman and about 50 natives raced after the man from the pyramid. It was difficult to focus on the figure but under his left arm he carried a tiny stone cube that David recognised from manuscripts as the Great Bear. He was sprinting towards a small white circle that hovered about two feet off the ground. As he careered through the jungle foliage he pointed a cylindrical device at the ring. The natives had almost reached him and judging from their cries they weren't about to slap him on the back and ask if he fancied another cuppa. Their quarry let out a yell and dived through the hovering circle. It disappeared immediately. But then something even more amazing happened.

The man in the bow tie tore straight through the cinema screen and landed on the raised area in front of the seats, still carrying the Great Bear. He peered into the audience, got to his feet and brushed the dust from his sleeves. Absolute silence.

'Hello,' he said and gave the kind of smile that makes other people want to smile, too. 'I'm the Doctor.'

They pre-date the memories of most men. They wear black bowler hats, pin-striped suits and carry umbrellas even in the height of summer. Grey faced and unsmiling they can be seen on the streets of the City before most people have hit their snooze alarms. This morning, like most mornings, they walk to work. A newspaper vendor idly wonders just why they wear those hats, but as usual, no-one greets them and few notice them. On the fiftieth floor of Lyttle Monsters Inc., the lift doors open and four of these City denizens step onto the Axminster and troop into the boardroom. They sit at an oval table. No-one speaks until each of the 13 chairs is occupied. The figure at the top of the table, hidden by shadows, waits until the door to the room swings shut.

'Good morning.'

'Good morning,' the men in suits intone and now they remove their bowler hats. If the newspaper vendor had been present he'd have had his question answered. But he'd have had a few more questions and a lot more nightmares. Each of the figures sat around the table has a small, stubby pair of crimson horns protruding from their heads.

The figure in the shadows leans forward a little. 'We meet to discuss the matter of the Doctor...'

David Kershaw and the Doctor were strolling along the promenade that runs alongside the Thames. London looked happy and pleased with itself, all twinkling lights and Christmas decorations. 'Well, I hitched a lift with the Bom-borradohs. That was the ring you saw. Got into the pyramid and borrowed the Great Bairn.'

'Great Bear,' David said automatically. 'But why?'

'To give to you. For your museum. Heard it was in trouble and I rather like museums so having this on display should -'

'Should save our bacon!' He took the statue, a dark cube with richly decorated concave faces, and gazed on it. 'All my life...'

He looked up. The Doctor was gone.

Exactly one year later David Kershaw was on the sixteenth floor of Lyttle Monsters' London HQ. He'd reluctantly accepted an invite to their Christmas party, turned up alone and when the lift doors opened in the foyer he'd been dumbfounded to find the Doctor waiting for him. He joined him in the elevator and the attendant said, 'Going up!'

'Hello, David. Merry Christmas and all that. Actually, not Merry Christmas and all that. I'm disappointed in you, David.' His voice lowered. 'You've done something very bad.'

'It can't be all that bad.'

'I think you may have triggered the imminent and complete destruction of mankind.'

The lift doors opened. 'Welcome to the party,' said the attendant.

The room was warm and full of people and music. It was broad and lined with floor-to-ceiling windows that offered a stunning view of the city. But neither of the new arrivals noticed the party or the panorama as they stood by the Christmas tree. 'What did you do with it, David?'

'I put it on display. It was a huge hit. Saved the museum and –'

'And?'

'And then six months later the clamour began to die away. Then this toy company, Lyttle Monsters, offered to make models of it to sell in our gift shop. It was a great idea, Doctor. They took it and they're working on it now.'

The Doctor looked like he'd just been told he'd swallowed poison. 'You gave the Great Bairn to a toy company? Do you have any idea how cataclysmic -?'

A booming voice interrupted. 'Well, hello, David!' Its owner was a broad-shouldered monolith of a man. Expensive suit, skin as brown and lined as an old chamois leather. Cocktail glass in one hand, cigar in the other. 'Did I hear you say *Doctor*?' He spoke with an American accent, over friendly, as if he was trying to sell them something. 'Good to meet you, sir.'

But the Doctor had been distracted by a table of party food.

'I'm Hawke Lyttle the Third. I run this empire. Howdie.'

'Good nibbles, Mr Lyttle.'

The American stepped closer. 'Do you want to see the future, Doctor?'

'Nah. Seen it already. I'm starving. Haven't eaten since the siege of Mafeking. What is it?'

'It's couscous,' David replied.

The Doctor looked delighted. 'Couscous? Ha! Nine hundred years and I never... You know, I even like the name. Couscous. Couscous. Couscous,' he murmured, trying out the word with different spins of inflexion.

He turned back to the table and Lyttle added. 'If you don't see this, Doctor...' Something in his tone was unsettling. 'You'll regret it for as long as you live.'

The Doctor faced him. Serious. 'Well, that's a very long time, Mr Lyttle. After you...'

When they reached the lift the attendant stepped out and Lyttle punched in a PIN. The elevator began its ascent, rising above the lower portion of the building and sliding along the side of the narrower, higher levels. This part of the journey afforded more breath-taking views of London. 'I run a toy company that needs to know what people are interested in. And I couldn't help noticing that vampires are pretty hot right now. Books, films, television series. Vampires, vampires, vampires.'

'So you're making some vampire toys?' David asked. 'Nice idea.'

Mr Lyttle looked amused but didn't reply.

They reached the penultimate floor. One room, dominated by an arc that curved along one half of the chamber. The arc comprised 13 steel tubes, each about five feet high and three feet wide, glass-fronted but unlit.

'I'm developing the ultimate Christmas present for the high end market. People talk about a world recession but rich folk are still rich. They've got their cake...' He sauntered over to the side of the arc, pressed a button and stood back as a bank of buttons sprang from the wall. 'And I'm gonna take a slice! Or three. By offering them the ultimate accessory.'

The Doctor said, 'I know what this is Lyttle. You took the Great Bairn and I don't know how but you unlocked the DNA it contained and artificially created –'

'Oh, you know?' It was the first time Hawke Lyttle the Third had been surprised in a very long time.

'Got a message about it.' The Doctor nodded. 'Snooped around. Saw David's name on the guest list and put two and doom together. Mr Lyttle. This ends tonight.'

'Will one of you share the secret, please?' David sounded tetchy and nervous.

'No, Doctor. This begins tonight!'

Lyttle pressed a button and the half-cylinders lining the wall lit up, revealing their occupants. Each container held what looked to be a child, five, possibly six years old. They were similar but not identical. Dark hair scraped back to emphasize a widow's peek. Pale faces, red lips. They wore miniature versions of old-fashioned black dinner suits, white waistcoats and capes lined with scarlet velvet.

'Those aren't toys...' murmured David.

'We took the DNA evidence and genetically created the next generation of vampire

merchandise.'

David flinched as he saw one of the caped figures twitch.

Lyttle spread his arms to the arc. 'Vampires!'

The Doctor was suddenly at the American's side. 'You've created a dozen vampires? Do you know how powerful these children are?'

'They've been baking a while but I brought you up here to witness them becoming sentient. They will be completely formed in...' he glanced at his Rolex. 'Thirty seconds. Hallelujah, gentlemen!'

David was frozen. 'Why?'

'I thought seeing their genesis would impress you. Convince you to loan me more artefacts like the Great Bear and as the Doctor came up with the original I figured-'

'Lyttle!' shouted the Doctor. 'We have about twenty seconds until Armageddon. Switch them off, now! When they reach sentience-'

'If something does go wrong, which it won't, those tubes could hold a silverback and his mamma without a dime o' trouble.'

'Doctor!' said David. 'Look!'

The vampire children were beginning to stir. Fingers flexed, bowed heads became erect, blood-shot eyes sprang open.

'Don't you worry!' boomed Lyttle. He leant across the tube nearest to him. 'Now, little fella, you close your eyes and go back to sleep. You hear?'

But the 'little fella' simply smiled revealing two terrifying fangs. And then he shook his head.

'I said, I said go to sleep, now...' Lyttle was still booming but fear underpinned his words.

The child banged his fist against the re-inforced glass and a spider's web of cracks spread across the surface.

'Oh my god...' Lyttle stepped back.

The Doctor was at the controls. 'You've been fooled, Mr Lyttle. These don't operate a thing. Someone else is controlling this.'

David called out, 'Can you stop them, Doctor?'

More of the vampires were pounding against their chambers. The glass was breaking and the children ripped away the remaining shards.

'There's nothing I can do from here!' The Doctor looked up from the instrument bank. 'These strings have been cut!'

'The elevator!' yelled Lyttle. He reached the lift and punched the call button. 'No

response!

'We're trapped!' David shouted, but the Doctor's attention had been hijacked by a tiny blinking box attached to the ceiling.

In the boardroom on the level above the arc of vampires, a solitary figure sat at the oval table. He looked at a monitor which now hung over the table, studying the eyes of the Time Lord who stared into the camera below.

'Who-ever you are,' the Doctor was saying, 'this will destroy you and millions more if you don't pull the plug now!'

'Too late, Doctor...'

The vampires were out. Some had smashed the windows of the room and leapt into the night. David had gasped, stepped forward and shouted, 'No!' until he saw the figures swoop and whoop and zoom past the shattered panes. 'No...' he murmured.

Lyttle had pressed himself into a corner of the room. 'They can fly!'

'Well, of course they can fly!' the Doctor replied. He was pointing his sonic screwdriver at the lift button. 'Come on, come on... Deadlocked!' An anguished cry. He span around to face the room.

Six of the vampires had formed a line and were moving towards the Doctor, David and Lyttle. 'What happens now?' asked David.

'We may have time. I don't know. Depends how quickly they feel compelled to top up.' He tapped his neck and gave an awkward smile.

Lyttle blanched. 'They drink blood?'

'They're vampires, Mr Lyttle. Keep up.'

'How do we know if they're thirsty?' asked David.

'They'll bare their fangs!' A pause. 'And right on cue!' he added as the six vampires gave sharp little smiles to reveal their dagger-like teeth.

'One last hope. They've not communicated yet. If they can't speak they may not be fully formed so we can try to gently herd them away. But the moment one of them speaks...'

'Sounds like we've got a half a chance, Doctor.'

'That's the spirit, David!'

By now the three of them were shoulder-to-shoulder in the corner of the room. Elevator door on one side, window on the other.

'Hey!' said Lytton. 'I must be crazy! We can open the window! Get along the balcony and down the emergency exit.'

'Well, I hate to leave a party early,' replied the Doctor, 'but just this once I'll—'

As he turned to the window a flying vampire landed on the outside of the glass, sticking to pane with the tips of his fingers. He eyed his prey, paused then punched a hole through the window.

'If he talks we're all done for!' shouted the Doctor.

The little vampire thrust his head through the hole in the window. His blood red lips formed a macabre smile and then parted to speak. 'Merry Christmas!'

Chapter Six

Vampire Hurricane, Part Two

By Gavin Collinson

The crescent of vampires in front of the Doctor, David and Lyttle moved forwards, fangs bared and arms aloft. They may have resembled half a dozen children parodying Bela Lugosi but David knew these kids could kill. As he crushed his back into the wall he wondered which of them would plunge their teeth into his throat and -

The Doctor stepped forward. *Forward!* He raised his right arm, pointing to the back of the chamber. 'Go to your room!' he said to the infant closest to them. 'You've been a very naughty vampire!' Voice raised. 'I mean it! Go to your room!'

The children paused, exchanged glances and resumed their advance.

The Doctor caught David's sideways look. 'Well,' said the Time Lord. 'It's worked before.'

The Lost City of El Niño Diablo, 1934

The man interrogating the Doctor plunged his hand into the box of ice and as his fingers searched, he smiled. 'Let's see if this will convince you to talk...'

They sat opposite each other in a hut just outside the pyramid where ten minutes earlier the Doctor had been found clutching a small cube that now rested on the table between them. They were alone. The hut was about twenty foot square, a weird decorative clash of Incan and Americana with a portrait of Queen Victoria thrown into the mix. The calls of exotic birds filled the hot, humid air. Palm warblers, white hawks and bat falcons all screeching through the jungle. At last the man questioning the Doctor - the American explorer ostensibly leading the expedition - pulled his hand from the ice box and tossed a Hershey Bar across the table. 'Candy always helps me think.'

'I just had a take-away with Baden-Powell.' The Doctor thrust the chocolate into the middle of the table like a gambler staking a chip. 'And I doubt you'd believe what I had to say, so I'd rather-'

'Try me.'

'All right. What you call the Great Bear is the Great Bairn, *bairn* being an old Indo-European word for child or children. Someone must have misheard me when I called it that the last time. When it landed. And it's not stone in the sense that you know it. Several thousand years ago a very dangerous race faced a battle it knew would destroy its home planet. To avoid extinction the species regressed its children to the point of DNA, stored

them on this cube and jettisoned it into space. The plan was that if a single soldier survived, the cube could be found and the race rebooted. Following me so far?’

‘Oh, like a traffic cop, Doctor.’

‘Good. Because it fell to earth. The Incas found it, sensed the Great Bairn’s power and built a pyramid around it. I came back for a look-see and found an expedition – your lot – about to plunder it. But I need to take that cube because I’ve detected another alien life form very close by. And I suspect it might want to get its hands on it. I can’t allow that to happen. So I have to take the cube to the future, away from that alien.’

‘Okay.’

‘You know, just for once, it would be rather peachy if someone actually believed what I had to say before–’ He checked himself. ‘I’m sorry. Did you just say *okay*? As in okay-dokey. As in -’

‘Sure did, Doctor. Since joining the organisation that pays for my little expeditions, well, let’s just say I’ve heard weirder. Take the Great Bairn. But you’ll have to run for it. Just one thing. If you do take it to the future, are you sure it’ll be safe?’

The Doctor smiled. ‘What could possibly go wrong?’

London, Seventy-five years later.

‘We will feast!’ hissed the vampire children.

‘Oh, for the sake of... They’re kids!’ Lyttle grabbed the child who was entering through the window, tugging him into the room. ‘Now just you listen to-’

The vampire hit the floor with a bump. His eyes glowed electric red and Lyttle unfurled his fingers.

‘Forgive him!’ shouted the Doctor. ‘He didn’t mean to -’

But the creature clutched Lyttle’s lapels and in a startling display of strength, hurled him across the room. The American slammed into the arced bank of cylinders and crashed to the floor. The seven vampires switched their attention to the Doctor and David. ‘*Your turn...*’ David felt one grasp his hair and pull his head downwards. His neck had never felt so exposed. Through a vampire’s crooked arm he saw the crumpled figure of Lyttle look up. His lip was cut and a single drop of blood dropped to the floor. Although the vampires had their back to him, each of them froze.

‘Run, Lyttle!’ yelled the Doctor.

But the vampires moved as blurs and suddenly Lyttle was lost as seven capes flapped around him like a single fluttering bat.

David stepped forward but the Doctor grabbed his elbow. ‘There’s nothing we can do!’ The Time Lord was already on the move, pulling David through the gap in the window, onto the balcony and towards the emergency exit.

The Doctor flicked his sonic screwdriver and the television switched channel, changing from chat show to news item. It was a bulletin – a small child was causing havoc in –

Another channel. Another report. And another and another, each one bringing live pictures of chaos erupting across London and the south east of England.

‘They’re causing...’ David nodded towards the flat screen ‘but there’s only twelve of them. I’m thinking the military could -’

‘I’ve got some bad news for you,’ the Doctor interjected.

They were standing in the 16th floor’s party room where minutes earlier the festive celebrations had looked set to sizzle into the early hours. It was quiet now, tables and chairs overturned as the revellers had fled after the Doctor had elbowed the fire alarm.

‘There are several species that are similar to your idea of vampires. But that lot like to be called the Vampire Warriors because of their thirst, not just for blood, but for war. I’ve seen solitary Vampire Warriors get bored during a meal and destroy whole empires between entrées and the main course.’

‘You’re right,’ said David, ‘that is bad news.’

‘Oh, that’s not the bad news. Their race has a gift. The children replicate. They literally divide themselves less than an hour after their birth. One becomes three and then a dozen and then more and *those* clones immediately replicate until...’ He pointed to the television screen. ‘That is a light drizzle.’ The latest news report showed the huge Christmas tree in Trafalgar Square ablaze. As it toppled, people ran screaming from the falling flames. ‘And there’s a storm coming.’

On the fiftieth floor, the bowler hat appeared first, hovering in mid-air for a moment before its owner materialised beneath it. The teleportation was complete in seconds and he stepped forward, addressing the solitary figure at the oval table. ‘Well, General?’

He was answered with a smile. ‘It’s going magnificently! The Time Lord retreated to the lower levels where he sent a message to this nation’s armed forces, global governments and UNIT, instructing them not to go nuclear on the vampires. He assured them he was addressing the problem. Ha!’

‘I’d save the self-congratulation until you have the Doctor. When you sought to become one of us, to join the Council of Dead, we delivered the plan, the organisation to build the Vampire Arc and the information about the Great Bairn. So far *you* have delivered *nothing*.’

‘Look!’ The General gestured to the monitor. On the sixteenth floor the Doctor was sonic-ing the lift controls, trying to gain access to the elevator. ‘He’s actually trying to return! Does he think -’

‘Yes, he does! He carries no guns, explosives or nuclear weaponry. Yet he is the most

dangerously armed opponent you will ever face.'

'You worry too much. He will never defeat the deadlock.' General Marze, last survivor of the Prex-Em War Fleet, scrutinised the Doctor's face. 'Everything is running to plan.'

'Time for you to leave, David. Take the staircase and good luck.' The Doctor didn't look up from his work on the control panel.

'What are you doing?'

'Who-ever resurrected those vampires is close. The camera on the 49th level was very short range and I've got a feeling that the top floor is where the nerve centre's located. Evil geniuses always go for the penthouse or the cellar. Rule of thumb. You know, if ever you become an estate agent and get a purchaser who's an -' The elevator doors slid open. 'At last!' He stepped into the lift and David heard a groan.

'What's wrong?'

'I need a PIN to get this thing to the higher levels. The controls are deadlocked. And I've only got minutes before those vampires replicate and humanity is... It can't end like this. The world lost because I didn't have a number.'

David looked at the Doctor, at the eyes of a man used to having all the answers and suddenly finding he had none.

'I'm good with numbers!'

David span around. Hawke Lyttle the Third stood at the far end of the room, silhouetted in the doorway leading to the emergency staircase. 'I can forgive their attack on me. Hell, they're vampires. But they took my fob watch. And that belonged to Hawke Lyttle the First.'

David said, 'You know the PIN to get us to the top floor?'

'You bet your life!'

The Doctor beamed. 'What do you say, Mr Lyttle!'

The American stepped into the light. His face was scratched and pale, his suit torn and his top lip swollen. 'Let's go 'n' get my grand-daddy's watch,' he replied.

This time the view of the capital was less comforting. As the elevator crept up the side of Lyttle Monsters' London HQ, the three occupants could see fires below, helicopters whirring through the night and in the distance, tiny black dots pirouetting in mid-air before diving towards London.

The Doctor was pointing his sonic screwdriver at the ceiling.

'What are you doing?' Lyttle asked.

'Taking some readings.'

'The funny thing is,' said David, 'me and my brother used to play at being vampires. We used to love the old Hammer House of Horror movies and used to pretend we were... Ironic, eh, Doctor?'

'The readings indicate we'll be facing one non-human life form up there...'

'In our little role plays my brother was always the wisecracking one. He'd make terrible puns about fangs and dropping in for a quick bite and I'd be the old-fashioned hero, smiling but saying nothing. Because that's what heroes do.'

'And no security. Whatever's up there isn't armed.'

'But when those vampires hit, I was just terrified. Some hero.'

The Doctor slipped his sonic screwdriver into his pocket. 'You came with us, didn't you? You could have stayed downstairs but you chose to fight by my side. I'm afraid I've not got time for a morale boosting pep talk. But David Kershaw, there is one thing I want you to know...'

Grateful and proud, David put his hand on the Time Lord's shoulder. 'Yes, Doctor?'

'There's a vampire right behind you.'

A vampire was floating besides the elevator, keeping pace with its ascent and studying the three individuals within. As they faced him, each of the trio inside let out an almost comic yell of terror before the child punched his hand through the lift's glass casing.

David snatched the fire extinguisher from its fastening and smashed it against the creature's knuckles. The only effect was a fanged smile. 'Pathetic,' said the vampire.

'Get your own lift!' shouted the Doctor.

In one swift movement the infant creature ripped the pane of glass from the elevator and span it over London as if throwing a frisbee. He grinned. 'Going down?'

But as quickly as his onslaught had begun it was over. The Doctor peeked over the side of the elevator. 'He's just frozen in mid-air,' he told his companions. 'Like someone hit the pause button!'

David and Lyttle whooped with joy. 'You did it, Doctor!' the American shouted. 'You must have done something when you zapped 'em with your magic electric toothbrush thing.'

'One. It's a sonic screwdriver. Two. I didn't zap. I never zap. Three. The vampires are entering their replication phase. They close down to conserve energy and then, whoosh! You're suddenly facing several million vampires. We've got about ten minutes to save the planet.'

The lift doors opened and the Doctor strode forward, David immediately behind him and Lyttle bringing up the rear.

'You get one chance,' said the Doctor and raised his sonic screwdriver, aiming it at the monitor over the table. A flicker of recognition. 'General Marze! Hello, again. I'll get to the point. Those vampire children have been regressed to DNA strands before. It's time to do it again before they replicate. If you refuse I'll send an entropy pulse virus into your technology and in about one minute every piece of machinery that got you to this planet and gives you any kind of power... Well, let's put it this way. You'll wish you'd kept the receipt.'

'Put your vampires back in the box.' David took a step forward. 'The Doctor can take you and them to a part of the universe where you can live in peace. Just leave our planet.'

Marze smiled. 'I knew you'd come. That's why I sent you the message about all this to begin with, Doctor. To finally get you here. And now you've arrived, I would like the secret of the Time Lords.'

'Is that what this has all been about?' The Doctor looked deflated. 'Just another mad maniac who wants to get his hands on my TARDIS? To conquer all time and space and -'

'Don't insult me, Doctor! What would I want with time travel? I have no wish to be some gaping temporal tourist, visiting so many centuries like a holiday-maker flitting in and out of public museums.'

The Doctor pointed at him and then let his finger drop. 'Oh. Right. Then what do you want?'

'A blood sample. Nothing more.'

The Doctor narrowed his eyes. 'The technology that revived the vampires... you want to use that to...' He shook his head. 'The power of a Time Lord to regenerate!'

'Exactly!' Marze replied. 'I have the technology to take your blood and isolate your cells' ability to regenerate. I will splice that secret into my DNA. I'm an old man, Doctor. Lived for fifty decades.' He stood and stepped into the light. He appeared to be in his mid-thirties. Tall, muscular, lean. Thick dark hair. Tight khaki t-shirt. 'I need a few more centuries. And to prove to certain allies that-'

'It's not going to happen. So just regress those vampires or your world is dust.' The Doctor flicked his sonic screwdriver and it began to hum. 'Do it now.'

'Put that device away!'

The Doctor looked interested. 'Or else what?'

Behind David and the Doctor, Lyttle's eyes glowed an electric red.

'You're not armed. There's no security. Just do as I ask, General, and no-one gets hurt.'

Lyttle raised his right arm.

'That's a negative, soldier,' said Marze, 'and I believe that someone is about to get hurt right now.'

Lyttle brought his clenched fist crashing down, the Doctor gave a mieu of pain and toppled to the floor.

When the Doctor recovered consciousness he was sitting in one of the chairs at the oval table. He glanced at the monitor. It showed a vampire, still as a statue, surrounded by a ring of armed police. The image switched to another frozen vampire in the middle of a football pitch, a row of soldiers pointing rifles in its direction. More news flashes of inert vampires, from Berkshire to Bermondsey.

The Doctor tried to move but found his wrists lashed to the chair support. His arm throbbed and he could see Marze shaking his head.

'Too late, Doctor. Your friend took your blood sample, put it into the analyser and the isolation was over in no time. I have already added the required element to my bloodstream and you'll be relieved to hear I never even threatened him!'

David Kershaw walked back into the room carrying a metal bowl covered with a small white towel. 'He said he'd kill you if I didn't comply. Now, let him go, Marze!'

'But you can't leave now! Just when my boys are mobilising!'

On the monitor the Doctor could see the vampires begin to tremble.

'Stop this now!' he shouted.

Their shaking became faster until each individual vampire grew indistinct, a succession of black, white and red blurs.

'Marze, you have to stop this, now!'

'Now I have everything? Near immortality, an army of vampires and the blessing of the Council of Dead?' Marze was shaking his head. 'I shall never stop! Never!'

Suddenly, a ripple ran laterally through each vampire, with figures spitting out of their bodies. Fully formed children, each identical to the creature that spawned them. Clothes had somehow been replicated and the process began accelerating. It was impossible to count the number of vampires being sent spinning into existence but around each blurred figure at least a dozen stood waiting.

'They'll kill you, too, Marze!' the Doctor said. 'There's still time to stop them!'

'Kill me? They will obey me, Doctor! I am their father!'

The screen became black with vampires. Marze was laughing and the curtains surrounding the room swept back to reveal the chaos of the London night. The skies were thick with vampires, cackling with joy.

'A vampire hurricane,' murmured the Doctor.

'Listen to them! Children of the night!' yelled Marze. 'What music they make!'

'You're insane!' cried David

'No, no! I am immortal! I am...' He held his arms aloft in a mad victory salute and then looked down at his stomach. Something odd had happened. His toned abdomen had become flabby. It slowly curved outward until Marze was looking at a cute but fat little belly. 'What?'

David was by the Doctor's chair. 'I contaminated the blood sample,' he whispered. 'Put a dash of my own in there.'

'By the pricking of your thumbs,' said the Doctor, 'something human this way comes.' He stared at Marze.

The General's raven black hair turned white and within five seconds, most dropped to the floor. Marze looked in horror at his reflection on the flat screen monitor. His hand rapidly re-arranged his remaining locks, fashioning a hasty comb-over effect to cover his baldness. His skin was wrinkling and he shouted, 'The funny thing is, I feel younger now than I ever did. No, really! But I don't fancy going out. Not tonight. It's always a dear do, isn't it? Christmas!' He shook his fist at the screeching vampires that flew around the windows. 'Keep that music down! Do you hear?' He looked at the Doctor. 'Kids today! Not like when I was..' The General's frame was diminishing, his body becoming as curved as a bow. He clutched the table for support. Something within Marze noticed this movement and he roared, 'I will rule the universe...' A short cry of pain and he put his palm to the base of his back. 'But not today 'cause this weather's playing havoc with my back. *Will you be quiet?*' His teeth fell to the carpet. 'How are you, Doctor? How long has it been?' More wrinkles, more curvature of the spine. He indicated to the monitor. 'There's nothing on TV these days, is there? Don't know why I bother paying the licence.'

'Marze!' shouted David. 'I'm sorry!'

'You what, dear?'

'David, hand me my sonic! Inside pocket,' the Doctor said. 'General! There's still time to stop the vampires!'

'Vampires? What vampires?'

A line of the creatures appeared at the window. 'Look at them. You know, Doctor...' What remained of Marze flickered into beige and for a moment the General's body was a statue of dust. And then nothing. Just a heap of sand-like cells on the floor. One last ripple slinked through the small mound of Marze and his final words drifted through the air like a whisper. 'I blame the parents.'

'Me too,' said the Doctor, leaping from his chair, his fingers moving across the transparent keyboard built into the oval table.

'What are you doing?' David asked.

'Fighting an army. But it's too late. Too many of them unless...'

'Unless?'

'Launching boosters now! About one million micro-boosters that should...' The vampires outside the window vanished. On the monitor, images of fangs and fear become pictures of confused members of the public. 'Correction, *have*, returned the infant Vampire Warriors to the Great Bairn. DNA state. And you know what that means?'

'No.'

'It means, Mr Kershaw, you just saved humanity.'

'What happened to my head?' Hawke Lyttle staggered to his feet. 'I remember the party but *wowser!* What was in that cocktail?'

'Good, good, good,' said the Doctor. 'The vampire infection has also regressed. Victims should be right as -'

'Hey, you guys! What gives? My memory's a little...' His index fingers made circles in the air.

'No time to explain, Mr Lyttle. Too much to do. Got to take care of the Great Bairn. Properly this time. Got to get David home for midnight. No problem in the TARDIS. And finally, got to set those micro-boosters to explode. Should be quite a fireworks display.'

Lyttle sidled up to David and put his arm around the other man's shoulder. 'Hey, buddy. You'll fill in the blanks, won't you? What happened to me?'

'Well... for a brief period of time... you turned into a vampire.'

Lyttle looked at him as though he'd gone crazy. 'Dave! I'm in the toy business. That happens to me every Christmas!'

David smiled at the wonderful normality of the scene. From the hallway he could see his three young kids watching TV in the front room and his wife at the kitchen table, gift wrapping a slab-like book on the Incas. A 1935 first edition she thought he didn't know about. Another smile. 'Hi, honey. I'm home.'

She kicked the kitchen door shut. 'No peeking! I'll be through in a second!'

David joined his children. His eldest, an eleven-year old called Zuzu, said, 'Hey, Dad! Seen the news? About this vampire hoax thing?'

'It wasn't a hoax, sweetie. Mankind was almost destroyed. But your old man helped save the human race.'

And I've got a role in the next series of Glee.' She wrinkled her nose at him.

His wife appeared in the doorway. 'Tough day?'

'Ahh, come here, you lot.'

He hugged his wife and his three kids leapt to join them. A family embrace that David finally interrupted by saying, 'The Christmas party got a little crazy.'

'What was that?' asked Zuzu.

They could hear a cacophony of explosions outside. 'The micro-boosters,' David murmured.

The three children ran to the window and tugged back the curtains. 'Fireworks!'

David's wife nodded to the ceiling where a sprig of mistletoe hung over them. As they kissed, the sky was lit up with dazzling red words a mile high.

DAVID KERSHAW!

This line faded and a new one ripped across the darkness:

THANK YOU FOR SAVING HUMANITY!

Another huge crackle and a new line:

MERRY CHRISTMAS AND...

'Dad!' cried Zuzu. 'I think you better see this!'

FANGS FOR THE MEMORIES!

His family looked at him, speechless. David Kershaw smiled, but said nothing.

Chapter Seven

Station Pressure

By Gavin Collinson

The Doctor pushed the barrel of the laser rifle to one side. 'There's no need for that.'

Max swung it back. 'I'm afraid there's every need.'

They stood in an ante-chamber of the Palace of Whispers, a small wood-lined room full of guards, sensors and security cameras.

Max was a short but powerfully built man who looked roughly human from the nose down. Of his three eyes, only his central one functioned, his other two covered by eye-patches. His face was a collection of green, red and blue scars and some believed he only got the job of captain of the guards because his right cheek resembled the Royal flag. His teeth were yellow and jagged and his hair looked like it had been cut with a knife and fork. Even his close friends agreed that his eye-patches were his best feature.

'Just let me through, Maxie. The Empress and I are old friends.'

'There's nothing more dangerous than old friends, Doctor.'

'Ahh, now. That's one of those lines that sounds quite good but is actually a bit rubbish. Lots of things more dangerous than old friends. Daleks, Cybermen, not washing your hands before baking scones-'

'What news?' Max was addressing a young guard who had just bounded into the room.

'The Empress has granted him an audience!'

The door was pushed open and the Doctor stepped into the Palace of Whispers' court room, a mile-high chamber carved from gold and ice. The Doctor could hear murmurs zip-ping through the air, ricocheting off the walls and ice-columns. These were the whispers of the long dead, the former leaders of this world whose wisdom still guided the empire. The Doctor glanced back at Max. 'Must get on your nerves after a bit.' He brushed past a couple of guards and sauntered to the front of the chamber.

Big Jack said, 'I thought that whole vampire thing had been a publicity stunt for those American movies...'

'Nope.' David shook his head. 'It was real enough.'

They sat in the refreshment room of the train station where moments earlier, David had finished recounting the tale of the vampire hurricane.

They faced each other in silence for a moment. 'You know...' Big Jack took a deep breath. 'I hated you, Dave. Mum was ill for three months and it was left to me to do everything. I thought you couldn't face it. Thought you were being a coward but after hearing that...'

'Sometimes the big heroic stuff is easy.' David's eyes were filling up. 'The tough stuff is the day-to-day things. And when a family is in trouble... The person who's big enough to step in, sort it out, keep going... Well, they're real heroes. Like you. Goh! You know, after you disappeared after the funeral and I had to sort everything out, I guessed you couldn't face it. But someone who risks their life like you did. No coward.'

'We should have talked more.'

'Mum couldn't shut us up when we were kids.'

'*Thick as thieves* she us to call us!'

David stared at the table. 'So. Can you forgive me?'

'Can you forgive me for leaving after the funeral?'

The two brothers shook hands.

The girl with red hair and the man in the porter's uniform watched the scene from behind the tea bar. 'Not exactly the warmest re-union was it?' she whispered.

'They're brothers.'

'Yeah, still. And their trains arrive any minute.'

He straightened his tie and took the porter's hat from her head. 'That's the way it works sometimes,' he said. 'I'll tell them to get to their platforms.'

The snow fell. As it had done for aeons, it fell to Earth, falling on the good and the evil, the troubled, the content, the loved, the lost and the lonely. Some saw the snow and perceived beauty. Others recognised the problems it brought and for some it was simply a sign that they had survived another year.

The ugly intercity trains pulled into platforms one and two at the same time. David and Jack shook hands again. Awkward nods.

'Let's get together in the new year. Some time.'

'Yeah. Let's not leave it another ten years.'

They turned and boarded their respective trains.

'They won't keep in touch,' said the girl. She was leaning out of the refreshment room window and sounded angry.

'He did his best.'

'Why didn't he come? He could have knocked some sense into them! *Why didn't he come?*'

She shut the window and her friend could see tears in her eyes. 'Hey, hey, come here...'
They heard the trains depart. 'That's the way it works sometimes,' he repeated.

The snow fell on Big Jack and David Kershaw. They faced each other on the station platform, both men having alighted before their trains pulled out.

'I'm so sorry, Jack!'

'I'm sorry I left!'

When the girl and her friend stepped from the refreshment room they were in time to see the brothers embracing.

'We're not waiting till the New Year!' said David. 'You and the family are coming over tomorrow! The wife always cooks too much and you've got to meet the kids. You'll love Zuzu! She's a bit bolshy! So, just like her uncle, then!'

'Oi, Dave-ster! But, it's a deal, as long as you're not cooking! We've a lot to catch up on!'

As they embraced again, the girl said in a pseudo-serious voice, 'That's the way it works sometimes!'

A full thirty seconds later her friend said, 'Trouble is... How's he going to get them back, now? The time thing he rigged up only worked for those trains. They'll be stuck here for –'

Wooo-woooooo!

The man in the porter's uniform looked down the track. 'I do not believe it...'

In the Palace of Whispers, the Brakari Empress looked down on the Doctor. 'Hello, again,' he said. 'It's been a long time.'

From the thousands of whispers that danced and tumbled through the chamber, the Doctor discerned her reply.

'Well, that's very kind. And yes. When we last met, all those centuries ago in the theatre, there was a man – braver than me – who helped save your life. He needs your help.'

Again, he sifted through the whispers to hear her response, eager to assist.

'Your capacity to transfer energy is remarkable. I need you to help me transport something through time and space...'

All four people on the platform turned to see the oncoming train, a beautiful 1950's locomotive, whistle blowing and white smoke billowing into the deep blue night. It slowed down, sliding to a halt in the station. The driver leant out of his cabin.

'Hop aboard, fellas!' he called to the brothers in an American accent. 'First stop Waterloo. Then Paddington!'

David shouted back, 'Trains don't stop at Waterloo *and* Paddington!'

'The Doctor's involved,' Jack reminded him quietly.

'This one does!' the driver confirmed.

Big Jack and David climbed onboard. The noise of the steam engine was thunderous but the two observers on the platform could still hear the brothers' laughter and gabbling excitement as their train surged majestically into the darkness.

'You're crying again!' said Rory.

'Am not,' snapped Amy. 'Must've got something in my eye. Bit of coal dust or something.'

The Doctor appeared between them, an arm around each of their shoulders. 'Try opening your eyes as wide as they'll go and then blowing your nose.'

'Doctor!'

'Actually, don't do that. That's terrible advice!'

'Where, *where* did you get that train from?' asked Rory.

'Ahh, well. Popped back and met a man called Joshua Lyttle. Railway magnate and all round good egg. He developed the Hawke. The engine you just saw, and the reason he became known as 'Hawke' Lyttle. Later Hawke Lyttle the First.'

Amy laughed. 'And he just lent you his train?'

'Told him about his grandson and suggested he owed me a favour. He didn't believe me at first but I showed him Hawke Lyttle the Third's watch. Which was also his watch. At the same time. If you see what I mean. *Accidentally* borrowed it last time we met. That seemed to convince him. *Anyway!* He was delighted to drive and using power from the Brakari the train will deliver Jack and David and then head back to the 1950s.'

Amy brushed snow from the Doctor's shoulder. 'You were lucky, mister!'

'Rory! Nip back and get the biscuits, would you? Time we were on our way!'

'Sure!'

The Doctor and Amy were alone on the platform. 'You look worried,' she said.

'Do not.'

'You so do. You're doing that thing you do when you're worried but you don't want me to worry. It's a rubbish thing, by the way.'

'General Marze had help. The readings I took in the lift... I just double-checked them in the TARDIS.'

'And?'

'The Council of Dead. I thought they were just an urban legend. A gothic make-believe scaring people round the camp fire and –'

'Here we are!' Rory had returned with the biscuits.

The Doctor's expression changed. Genuine joy this time. 'Good man! We can have them in the TARDIS!' A carefree Christmas smile. 'En route!'

'En route where?' asked Rory.

'I have no idea! Brilliant, isn't it? Ha ha!'

As they trudged down the platform, Amy said, 'Why didn't you just turn up and talk it through with them?'

'They're friends of mine who needed help, Amelia. That's all.' As they walked further into the distance, the falling snow began to obscure them. 'If there's one thing I've learnt in all my travels, it's this...' The distant sound of the Hawke's woo-woo whistle interrupted him momentarily. 'You don't need to see your guardian angel,' said the Doctor, 'to know they're watching over you.'

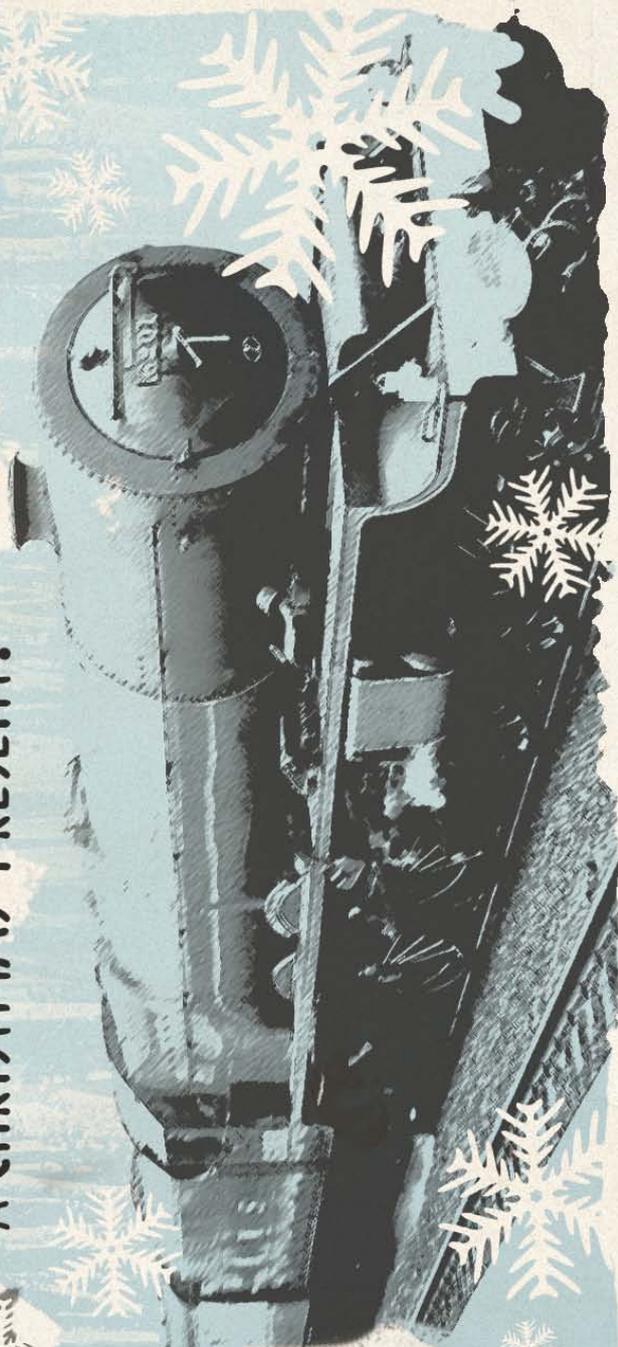
THE END

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Snowfall

WHEN IS A CHRISTMAS PAST
A CHRISTMAS PRESENT?



ARRIVING DECEMBER 2010